

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13

ACDA-10 OMB-01 SSO-00 /076 W

-----091403Z 012845 /53

R 091131Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2598

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERSUALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

SECDEF WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 2284

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: APRIL 8-9 SYRIAN MEDIA REPORT CONTACTS IN BEIRUT TO
RESOLVE SITUATION IN SOUTH

1. MEDIA REPORTING ON LEBANON STRESSED CONTACTS UNDER-
WAY IN BEIRUT TO RESOLVE SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION. PRESS
NOTED THAT, "CONTACTS IN BEIRUT BEING CONDUCTED ON
WIDE SCALE TO SOLVE SITUATION IN SOUTH AND DISCUSS
MEANS FOR RETURNING SECURITY TO IT AND FOR IMPE-
MENTING CAIRO AGREEMENT." PRESS REPORTED PES.
SARKIS DISCUSSED THIS SUBJECT WITH DEF AND FONMIN
BOUTROS AND ADF COMMANDER AL-HAJJ FOR TWO
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HOURS APRIL 8 FOLLOWING MEETING WITH INTERIOR MIN
ON GENERAL INTERNAL SECURITY. PRESS ADDED THAT
BOUTROS MET APRIL 7 WITH NUMBER OF LEBANESE OFFICIALS
TO TACKLE PROBLEMS IN SOUTH. COS KHOURY ALSO MET
WITH ADF CHIEF TO DISCUSS LEBANESE SECURITY. PRESS
ACCOUNT CONCLUDED ON OPTIMISTIC NOTE, ASSERTING "OFFI-
CIAL SOURCES HINTED THAT LEBANESE AUTHORITIES HOPE

CURRENT CONTACTS WOULD LEAD TO FRUITFUL OUTCOME CONTAINING AND SUPPRESSING CONFLICT, ADOPTING NECESSARY PROCEDURES FOR PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE, AND IMPLEMENTING RIYADH AND CAIRO SUMMIT RESOLUTIONS."

2. APRIL 8 PRESS CITED COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY REGIONAL COMMAND OF LEBANESE BAATH PARTY ON 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF PARTY'S ESTABLISHMENT IN WHICH LEBANESE BAATHISTS PLEDGED SUPPORT TO AIMS OF ASAD AND SARKIS. DECLARATION URGED COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING LEBANESE PEOPLE AND PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE WITHIN CONTEXT OF AGREEMENTS CONCLUDED BETWEEN PLO AND LEBANESE AUTHORITIES.

3. APRIL 9 AL-THAWRAH COLUMNIST STRESSED OPTIMISTIC THEME. NOTING THAT SITUATION IN LEBANON CRITICAL, HE OPINED THAT GOL ATTEMPTING TO AVOID COMPLICATIONS WHICH COULD IMPEDE REESTABLISHMENT OF SECURITY. HE SUGGESTED THAT, "SUCCESS OF LEBANESE GOVT IN TACKLING CURRENT ISSUES AND ITS FUTURE VIEW OF NEW LEBANON CONSTITUTE STRONG MARKS THAT LEBANON HAS MADE GOOD PROGRESS AND IS FULLY RECOVERED FROM WAR CONSEQUENCES. IT IS APPROACHING COMPLETION OF NORMALCY."

4. COLUMNIST MUHAMMAD ZARUF WROTE ARTICLE IN APRIL 9 AL-THAWRA TO ANSWER QUESTIONS REGARDING ADF ROLE IN LEBANON AND MEANS OF RETURNING STABILITY TO SOUTH. HE ASSERTED THAT, "ADF CAPABLE OF PLAYING PRIMARY AND EFFECTIVE ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING PEACE AND SECURITY IN LEBANON. ADF MUST GO DIRECTLY TO REGION WHERE CON-

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FLICT TAKING PLACE AND CONDUCT DETERRENT OPERATIONS AMONG THOSE FIGHTING. IF COMPREHENSIVE POLITICAL DECISION REQUIRED TO FACILITATE THIS, ARAB STATES WHO HAVE FORCES PARTICIPATING IN ADF AND WHO SUPPORT THEM FINANCIALLY AND MILITARILY MUST MOVE QUICKLY TO ISSUE APPROPRIATE DECISIONS." ZARUF REITERATED THAT, LEBANESE GOVT HAS RIGHT TO INTERVENE QUICKLY IN SOUTH AND RESORT TO POLITICAL AND MILITARY MEANS TO RESTORE SECURITY THERE. AS FOR METHODS TO END CHAOS IN SOUTH, PROLONGED DISCUSSION IS NECESSARY TO SELECT BEST FROM AMONG VARIOUS AVAILABLE CHOICES. BUT TO SAY THAT SITUATION IN SOUTH CANNOT BE STABILIZED IN THIS WAY BECAUSE ISRAEL MIGHT MOVE TO PREVENT IT REFLECTS FEAR AND WEAKNESS WHICH DOMINATE SOME AND HINDER THEM FROM LOOKING FORWARD WITH OPEN MIND." COLUMNIST CONCLUDED THAT, "WHAT IS HAPPENING IN SOUTH LEBANON IS TEST FOR PRES. SARKIS, ADF AND ALL LEBANESE. THESE THREE PARTIES MUST PASS THIS TEST IN DECISIVE AND

SUCCESSFUL WAY."

5. COMMENT: MEDIA REPORTING AND COMMENTARY SEEM
DESIGNED TO DOWNPLAY SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION IN
SOUTH LEBANON. EVEN ZARUF'S COLUMN, NOTING
THAT PROLONGED DISCUSSION SHOULD PRECEDE SELECTION
OF BEST OPTION, SEEMS TO BE A REMINDER TO FORESTALL
ANY RASH ACTION. BEYOND THAT, HE TAKES FAMILIAR
SYRIAN POSITION OF PLACING PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY ON SARKIS
FOR USE OR NON-USE OF ADF.
MURPHY

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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